

### AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A method of escalating non-realtime customer communications in a contact, the method comprising:
  - receiving said customer communications from customers, in a plurality of shared file folders, said shared file folders configured in a central processing area of the contact center;
  - designating at least one of said customer communications as aged based on a set of predetermined escalation criteria;
  - extracting the at least one aged customer communication from the plurality of shared file folders;
  - routing the aged customer communication with an escalation service to an immediate workflow such that the aged customer communication is routed by the immediate workflow for immediate response to a first designated agent of a plurality of designated agents that send responses to customers;
  - presenting the aged customer communication to the first designated agent such that the aged customer communication is displayed on a desktop of the first designated agent; and
  - sending, under the direction of said first designated agent, a response to a customer associated with ~~responding to~~ the aged customer communication, ~~wherein the first designated agent answers the aged customer communication on the desktop,~~
  - wherein the escalation service is adapted to escalate ~~escalates~~ an immediate customer communication to the immediate workflow for routing to the first designated agent.
2. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the desktop includes a visual indicator, further wherein the visual indicator includes an expiration time for the aged customer communication in the plurality of shared file folders.
3. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the customer communication is designated as immediate based on the set of predetermined escalation criteria before the customer communication becomes aged.

4. (Currently Amended) A method of escalating non-realtime communications in a contact center, the method comprising:

extracting an aged communication from a plurality of shared file folders, wherein the plurality of shared file folders are configured in a central processing area of the contact center, and further wherein a communication is designated as aged based on a set of predetermined escalation criteria;

routing the aged communication with an escalation service to an immediate workflow such that the aged communication is routed by the immediate workflow to a first designated agent for immediate response to ~~a first designated agent~~;

presenting the aged communication to the first designated agent such that the aged communication is displayed on a desktop of the first designated agent; and

responding to the aged communication, wherein the first designated agent answers the aged communication on the desktop,

wherein the escalation service is adapted to escalate ~~escalates~~ an immediate communication to the immediate workflow for routing to the first designated agent and wherein the escalation service checks a present threshold for a maximum number of immediate workflows and delays escalating the customer communications designated as immediate until the number of immediate workflows is below the threshold.

5. (Previously Presented) The method as claim in claim 1 further comprising monitoring the aged customer communication displayed on the first designated agent's desktop, wherein when the first designated agent does not answer the aged customer communication, the immediate workflow routes the aged customer communication to a second designated agent.

6. (Original) The method as claimed in claim 5 further comprising sending an acknowledgment message when the first and second designated agents are unavailable.

7. (Original) The method as claimed in claim 5 further comprising prompting the first designated agent when the step of responding does not occur within a predetermined timeout period after the step of presenting.

8. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 7 wherein the aged customer communication is routed to the second designated agent after the prompting step is unanswered by the first designated agent.

9. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 7 wherein the aged customer communication is routed to the second designated agent after the first designated agent answers the prompting step by declining to respond to the aged customer communication.

10. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 1 further comprising: changing the set of predetermined escalation criteria during the responding step.

11. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 5 wherein the first and second designated agents may select non-realtime customer communications from the plurality of shared file folders that are not designated as aged, and further wherein the first and second designated agents respond to those non-realtime customer communications not designated as aged.

12. (Original) The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein an agent is designated based on a set of predetermined designation criteria.

13. (Currently Amended) A system for escalating non-realtime customer communications in a contact center, the system comprising:

means for receiving said customer communications from customers, in a plurality of shared file folders, in said contact center;

means for designating at least one of said customer communications as aged based on a set of predetermined escalation criteria;

means for extracting the aged customer communication from the plurality of shared file folders;

means for routing the aged customer communication with an escalation service to an immediate workflow such that the aged customer communication is routed by the immediate workflow for immediate response to a first designated agent of a plurality of designated agents that send responses to customers;

means for presenting the aged customer communication to the first designated agent such that the aged customer communication is displayed on a desktop of the first designated agent; and

means for sending, under the direction of said first designated agent, a response to a customer associated with ~~responding to~~ the aged customer communication, ~~wherein the first designated agent answers the aged customer communication on the desktop,~~

wherein the escalation service is adapted to escalate ~~escalates~~ an immediate customer communication to the immediate workflow for routing to the first designated agent.

14. (Previously Presented) The system as claimed in claim 13 wherein the desktop includes a visual indicator, further wherein the visual indicator includes an expiration time for the aged customer communication in the plurality of shared file folders.

15. (Previously Presented) The system as claimed in claim 13 wherein the customer communication is designated as immediate based on the set of predetermined escalation criteria.

16. (Previously Presented) A system for escalating non-realtime communications in a contact center, the system comprising:

means for extracting an aged communication from a plurality of shared file folders, wherein the plurality of shared file folders is configured in a central processing area of the contact center, and further wherein a communication is designated as aged based on a set of predetermined escalation criteria;

means for routing the aged communication with an escalation service to an immediate workflow such that the aged communication is routed by the immediate workflow for immediate response to a first designated agent;

means for presenting the aged communication to the first designated agent such that the aged communication is displayed on a desktop of the first designated agent; and

means for responding to the aged communication, wherein the first designated agent answers the aged communication on the desktop,

wherein the escalation service escalates an immediate communication to the immediate workflow for routing to the first designated agent and wherein the escalation service checks a present threshold for a maximum number of immediate workflows and delays escalating the customer communications designated as immediate until the number of immediate workflows is below the threshold.

17. (Currently Amended) The system as claimed in claim 13 ~~claim 17~~ further comprising means for monitoring the aged customer communication displayed on the first designated agent's desktop, wherein when the first designated agent does not answer the aged customer communication, the immediate workflow routes the aged customer communication to a second designated agent.

18. (Original) The system as claimed in claim 17 further comprising means for sending an acknowledgment message when the first and second designated agents are unavailable.

19. (Previously Presented) The system as claimed in claim 17 further comprising means for prompting the first designated agent when the means for responding are not activated within a predetermined timeout period after the means for presenting displays the aged customer communication on the desktop of the first designated agent.

20. (Original) The system as claimed in claim 19 wherein the aged customer communication is routed to the second designated agent after the means for prompting is unanswered by the first designated agent.

21. (Previously Presented) The system as claim in claim 19 wherein the aged customer communication is routed to the second designated agent after the first designated agent answers the means for prompting by declining to respond to the aged customer communication.

22. (Previously Presented) The system as claimed in claim 13 further comprising: means for changing the set of predetermined escalation criteria when the means for responding are activated.

23. (Previously Presented) The system as claimed in claim 17 wherein the first and second designated agents may select non-realtime customer communications from the plurality of shared file folders that are not designated as aged, and further wherein the first and second designated agents respond to those non-realtime customer communications not designated as aged.

24. (Original) The system as claimed in claim 13 wherein an agent is designated based on a set of predetermined designation criteria.

25. (Currently Amended) A system of escalating a non-realtime customer communication in a contact center, comprising:

a plurality of shared file folders where the non-realtime customer communication is received and stored, wherein the plurality of shared file folders are configured in a central processing area of the contact center, and further wherein a customer communication designated as aged based on a set of predetermined escalation criteria;

an escalation service coupled with the plurality of shared file folders such that the escalation service routes the aged customer communication to an immediate workflow; and

a plurality of desktops for use by designated agents that send responses to customers, said desktops adapted such that the aged customer communication is displayed on a desktop of a first designated agent after receiving the aged customer communication from the immediate workflow,

wherein the first designated agent provides an immediate response to a customer associated with the aged customer communication on the desktop, and further wherein the escalation service is adapted to escalate ~~escalates~~ an immediate customer communication to the immediate workflow for routing to the first designated agent.

26. (Previously Presented) The system as claimed in claim 25 wherein the desktop includes a visual indicator, further wherein the visual indicator includes an expiration time for the aged customer communication in the plurality of shared file folders.

27. (Previously Presented) The system as claimed in claim 25 wherein the customer communication is designated as immediate based on the set of predetermined escalation criteria before the customer communication becomes aged.

28. (Currently Amended) A system of escalating a non-realtime communication in a contact center, comprising:

a plurality of shared file folders where the non-realtime communication is received and stored, wherein the plurality of shared file folders are configured in a central processing area of the contact center, and further wherein an aged communication is extracted from the plurality of shared file folders based on a set of predetermined escalation criteria;

an escalation service coupled with the plurality of shared file folders such that the escalation service routes the aged communication to an immediate workflow; and

a plurality of desktops for use by designated agents that send responses to customers, said desktops adapted such that the aged communication is displayed on a desktop of a first designated agent after receiving the aged communication from the immediate workflow,

wherein the first designated agent provides an immediate response to the aged communication on the desktop, and further wherein the escalation service escalates an immediate communication to the immediate workflow for routing to the first designated agent and wherein the escalation service is adapted to check ~~checks~~ a present threshold for a maximum number of immediate workflows and to delay ~~delays~~ escalating the customer communications designated as immediate until the number of immediate workflows is below the threshold.

29. (Previously Presented) The system as claimed in claim 25 further comprising a second designated agent, wherein when the first designated agent does not answer the aged customer communication, the immediate workflow routes the aged customer communication to the second designated agent.

30. (Original) The system as claimed in claim 29 further comprising sending an acknowledgment message when the first and second designated agents are unavailable.

31. (Previously Presented) The system as claimed in claim 29 wherein the aged customer communication is routed to the second designated agent after the first designated agent does not answer the prompt.



32. (Previously Presented) The system as claimed in claim 29 wherein the aged customer communication is routed to the second designated agent after the first designated agent answers the prompt by declining to respond to the aged customer communication.

33. (Previously Presented) The system as claimed in claim 25 wherein the first designated agent is prompted when the first designated agent does not respond within a predetermined timeout period after the aged customer communication is displayed on the desktop.

34. (Previously Presented) The system as claimed in claim 25 further comprising: means for changing the set of predetermined escalation criteria while the first designated agent responds to the aged customer communication.

35. (Previously Presented) The system as claimed in claim 29 wherein the first and second designated agents may select non-realtime customer communications from the plurality of shared file folders that are not designated as aged, and further wherein the first and second designated agents respond to those non-realtime customer communications not designated as aged.

36. (Original) The system as claimed in claim 25 wherein an agent is designated based on a set of predetermined designation criteria.

37. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for escalating non-realtime customer communications in a contact center, comprising:

- a storage media for storing a computer application;
- a processing unit coupled to the storage media; and
- a user interface coupled to the processing unit, said user interface adapted to allow ~~such that~~ a plurality of users to ~~users can~~ receive an aged customer communication from an immediate workflow through an escalation service, wherein the plurality of users can provide an immediate response to the aged customer communication, and further adapted to allow ~~wherein~~ the immediate workflow to receive ~~can receive~~ an immediate customer communication from the escalation service for routing to the plurality of users.